

EDGE INTERACTIVE  
RESEARCH

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# Factors in Recruiting Students to College and University

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## Executive summary

In an ongoing effort to better understand the key factors in recruiting students, EDge Interactive and Youthography surveyed Canadian and American students in high school and university. The survey was designed to explore the issues surrounding post-secondary school selection.

The research indicated the following:

- One in five students considers schools outside their country
- Prospective students apply to three schools
- School visits and the Web are key factors in school research
- Programs are a primary factor in choosing a school - financial concerns are shorter-term
- Prospective students want a mix of e-mail and mail communication
- Prospective students want to hear from you at least twice a month

## Methodology

As part of an ongoing investigation regarding student recruitment, an online survey was conducted by EDge Interactive and Youthography.

The survey itself was fielded from Monday, March 29<sup>th</sup> to Monday, April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2004. The survey was fielded to over 40,000 randomly generated potential respondents from the SchoolFinder.com database in both Canada and the United States, aged 13-29; all with an equal chance of agreeing to participate or decline. In all, 1,480 Canadian respondents and 1,112 American respondents completed the survey. This sample base, when viewed versus the entire 13-29-year-old population of these two countries, provides us with a confidence interval of 2.6% for Canada and 2.9% for the US, 19 times out of 20. The margin of error provided by the established confidence interval is fairly low, thus allowing for reasonably confident interpretations of all statistics in this study.

## One in five students considers schools outside their country

78.8% of Canadian students are considering a Canadian school and 20.5% are considering a US school. The ratio is similar with US high school students (79.9% are considering a school in the US and 19.3% in Canada).

## Prospective students apply to three schools

On average, Canadian students apply to 2.6 schools inside Canada. Over 82.8% of Canadian students looking inside Canada apply to more than one school. Only 25.5% apply to four or more schools.

American students apply to 2.9 schools in the US, on average, with over 84.5% applying to more than one school. 41.9% apply to four or more schools.

## School visit and the Web are key factors in school research

When asked what influenced them the most in their post-secondary school research, Canadian prospective students stated that school visits, friends and family, and the school's Web site were most important. The results are as follows:

1.	School Visit	46.0%
2.	Friends and Family	41.9%
3.	School Web Site	36.7%
4.	View Book (print material/CD)	32.1%
5.	Education Fair	27.7%
6.	Directory Web Sites	25.2%
7.	Counselors	20.8%
8.	Print Directories	6.6%

American students put more emphasis on school Web sites (51.2%), view book material (37.6%) and directory Web sites (29.6%) than their Canadian counterparts.

Print directories were consistently the least important.

It is notable that females were, overall, more likely to rely upon all of these factors than males were. Female respondents seemed to solicit opinions and factor in more considerations than males.

## Programs are a primary factor in choosing a school - financial concerns are shorter-term

When asked what the most important factors in choosing a school are, Canadian prospective students said programs are by far the most important. The results are as follows:

1.	Program	85.5%
2.	Scholarships / Financial Aid	55.9%
3.	Tuition Cost	51.2%
4.	Location	49.6%
5.	Reputation of School	49.0%
6.	Campus Life / Student Services	46.3%
7.	Level of Service	38.4%

### American students follow the same line of thinking.

Scholarships / financial aid and tuition costs are clearly important, as well. It is interesting to note that if the top two answers are considered (ranked as very important and important) these 'money' factors move down in ranking:

1.	Program	97.0%
2.	Campus Life / Student Services	86.3%
3.	Level of Service	86.3%
4.	Scholarships / Financial Aid	84.1%
5.	Reputation of School	83.8%
6.	Location	82.2%
7.	Tuition Cost	80.3%

While practical issues are still important, there is a slightly higher focus on the school's softer characteristics such as campus life and services.

Further to that, it appears that once students enroll in a post-secondary school, their views change. Students already in college and university felt that location (66.9%) and reputation of the school (51.1%) were more important than tuition cost (47.6%) and scholarships (43.2%).

These results seem to indicate that while scholarships and tuition are important, they are short-term issues. In terms of communicating with prospective students, the focus should be on more than finance. At the end of the day, prospects will be considering more than scholarships and tuition cost.

## Students want a mix of e-mail and mail communication

Overall, students appear to like a mix of mediums (54.0%). If they were to receive communication in only one medium, e-mail (23.0%) would top the list, followed by mail (19.7%) and telephone (3.3%).

It would seem that a mixture is a good overall approach, with the prospect perhaps being able to indicate their personal preference after the relationship has been engaged.

Overall, American high school students prefer to be communicated with by both e-mail and traditional mail. 44.8% indicated they would prefer an even mix of mediums. Absolutely no American students wanted to be contacted by phone.

Once enrolled in post-secondary school, students in both Canada and the US wanted more e-mail communication (34% and 41.1%).

## Students want to hear from you at least twice a month

Most of the Canadian respondents are looking for communication no less than once monthly but no more than 6 times monthly. By the numbers, the weighted average is just over 2 times (2.35) monthly.

The majority of US students (60%) wished to be contacted somewhere between 1 to 2 times per month during the recruiting process.

## EDge Interactive

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